

Emergency Management 2017 Annual Report

2017



Cowley County Emergency Management's sixth annual report is now available. This report will highlight activities, accomplishments and an overall review of the Emergency Management program.



Cowley County Emergency Management
321 E. 10th Avenue | Winfield, KS | 67156
620.221.0470
www.cowleycounty.org/em



[Happy Birthday Cowley County](#)

Cowley County celebrated its 150th birthday throughout 2017. Cowley County was officially organized and named Hunter County in March 1867 and encompassed a larger territory reserved for the Osage Indians. The county was soon renamed for Matthew Cowley, a First Lieutenant in Company I of the 9th Kansas Cavalry, and the boundaries changed to present day Cowley County. The first brave settlers came to stake their claims along pristine waterways and among the rolling Flint Hills when the county opened for settlement in 1870.



Cowley County Commission Meeting on March 7th, 2017 proclaiming Cowley County's 150th Birthday.

The Cowley County Historical Society Museum “Voices from the Past” presented historical portrayals filled with historical facts and folklore. In addition to Lt Cowley, being portrayed by Stephen Markley (CERT Volunteer), Col E.C. Manning (Clyde Vassey) and James Land (Dr. Chris Wilson) will reenact the heated claim dispute of these influential men.

Brad Beeson of Miles Funeral Home will portray one of the earliest professions during the settlement of Cowley County, funeral director, also known as an undertaker. Prairie Ridge school teacher, Miss Montra (Stephanie Anglemyer, 911 Communications Supervisor), will speak to the parents of her pupils as the new school year kicks off.



Emergency Management Staff

Brian Stone, CEM®, KCEM **John Stradal, KCEM**
Director Assistant Coordinator

Jason Kazban, KCEM, MEP **Taylor Dory**
EM Specialist Volunteer Coordinator

Cowley Co. Emergency Auxiliary (CCEA)

Cameron Groom **Ben Dobbs**
President Vice-President

Crystal Merz
Secretary-Treasurer

Cowley Co. Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

Cheryl Underwood **Loretta Klamik**
President Vice-President

Glenda Schmidt **Martin Moon**
Treasurer Communications Officer

Crystal Merz **Steve Williams**
Secretary Training Coordinator

Cowley Co. Animal Response Team (CART)

Michelle Crane
President

Cowley Co. Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES)

Randy Storey **Ron Upton**
RACES Officer Deputy RACES Officer

Inside this Issue

Happy Birthday Cowley County	2
Staff/Volunteer Officers	3
Staff Info/Accomplishments	4
EM Volunteer Groups	6
Volunteer Hours	8
Activities	9
Fundraisers	10
Community Outreach/Education	11
Severe Weather Operations	13
Severe Weather Statistics	13
Communications	14
Preparedness	15
Exercises	17
Training	19
Working With/In Community	21
Disasters	22
Social Media	23

Cowley County Emergency Management's Mission is:

To save lives, protect property and reduce the impacts of disasters through the mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery phases of Emergency Management.

Staff Information

2017 was a year of sadness and change for our agency. On March 12th, Jolan Csukas, Volunteer Coordinator for Cowley County Emergency Management, passed away. She had been with the agency since October 2012 and served as a volunteer for years prior to that. On May 8th, 2017, Taylor Dory, a volunteer with the Emergency Auxiliary, began his duties as the Volunteer Coordinator.



Staff Accomplishments and Highlights

Brian Stone, CEM®, KCEM - Director

In September, Brian graduated from FEMA's National Emergency Management Advanced Academy at the Emergency Management Institute in Emmitsburg, MD. He completed the full curriculum of 160 hours that provided the strategic level training, education and the essential skills and tools for emergency management professionals to lead dynamic and resilient programs.

In addition, Brian is listed as a Featured Mentor on the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) website. The mentors are recognized by IAEM's Certification Commission to assist others in obtaining their CEM®.

Brian had the honor of addressing a large crowd of County Commissioners at the Kansas County Commissioners Association breakout meeting as part of the Kansas Association of Counties annual conference in Overland Park, KS. He and Dusty Brillhart from Morton County EM led the discussion of a program titled, "Planning Today for What Will Happen."

John Stradal, KCEM - Assistant Coordinator

In 2017, John continued his involvement with the Kansas Emergency Management Association (KEMA), serving as the recertification chair of the Standards and Practices committee, which oversees the Kansas Certified Emergency Manager credential. John also serves as KEMA's representative to the Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee, providing input from the EM community to the state's communications policy making group and keeping KEMA members informed on current topics and issues.

John applied and was accepted to the National Emergency Management Advanced Academy at the Emergency Management Institute in Emmitsburg, MD. Only a limited number of applicants from all across the country are accepted to this 4 part academy which explores topics, challenges, and best practices within the field of emergency management.

In addition, John continues to work toward his Certified Emergency Manager credential from the International Association of Emergency Management.

Jason Kazban, KCEM, MEP - EM Specialist

Jason, who performs duties as an Emergency Management Specialist, volunteered and was voted onto the Board of Directors for Leadership Cowley County. Jason also served on the Curriculum committee that re-authored the course. This process took a substantial amount of time and energy. The new course was presented to 24 local individuals during the 2017 Leadership Cowley County class. This course educates citizens on civic responsibilities and provides tools on how to become a leader when dealing with adaptive challenges they may be faced with.



Taylor Dory - Volunteer Coordinator

In November, Taylor graduated from the Leadership Cowley County (LCC) program. This program equips Cowley County citizens to better address civic challenges facing their communities by developing leadership skills, enhancing awareness of community needs and assets, building relationships and networks of trust and providing opportunities for self-reflection and personal transformation. Taylor is working toward obtaining his Kansas Certified Emergency Manager (KCEM) credential.



Alone we can do little; together we can do so much ~ Helen Keller

Emergency Management Volunteer Groups

When emergencies occur or disasters strike, volunteers are a welcome sight for EM Staff and a vital resource for all agencies. Volunteers are a crucial part of the Emergency Management program as they are willing to endure the worst conditions to help out when needed. Volunteers give their time and effort without expecting anything in return. EM volunteers performed 1,415 hours of work in support of training, outreach and response to events in 2017.

COWLEY COUNTY EMERGENCY AUXILIARY (CCEA)

The Cowley County Emergency Auxiliary is a volunteer based group that acts under the direction of Cowley County Emergency Management. The group dates back to August 8th 1985. The CCEA's primary role at this time is to provide trained storm spotters for Cowley County. This elite group of volunteers donate their valuable time and provide a commitment to ensure the safety of Cowley County residents through early warnings and work closely with other public safety agencies within the county. The Cowley County Emergency Auxiliary continues to be a big part of the community by working with the public in weather and personal safety.

CCEA meets the 2nd Tuesday of every month at 7:30pm.

COWLEY COUNTY COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (CERT)

CERT training is available in Cowley County at least once a year for anyone interested in learning how they can make a difference in the lives of their family, their neighborhood, their community and beyond in case of a natural or manmade disaster. Our local CERT group is open to anyone who desires to receive such training, whether or not they choose to use the information gained to help themselves and family only, or are willing to be available for other volunteer opportunities. Monthly meetings are held to discuss opportunities where members can help with local community functions such as traffic control, health and safety fairs, drive-through flu clinics, parade route safety, programs to enhance the public's understanding of emergency preparedness, and many others. These volunteer hours often free up local police and others who would be paid for their time. CERT members receive monthly training to enhance or refresh skills learned in the original CERT training. Our goals this next year are (1) to learn more about the other emergency response groups in order to coordinate efforts effectively in an emergency, and (2) to gain training that will make our team more useful to the local first responders, such as police and fire departments. We want everyone to know how to MAKE A KIT – MAKE A PLAN – BE PREPARED – STAY INFORMED

CERT meets the 2nd Tuesday of every month at 6:00pm.

COWLEY COUNTY ANIMAL RESPONSE TEAM (CART)

During natural disasters, people have refused to leave their homes when advised to do so because they will not leave their pets behind. As a result, states, and then counties, began to form animal response teams (SART and CART). The goal is to: identify shelters that will accept owners and their pets; arrange flexible visiting schedules if pets and owners cannot shelter together; and provide transportation and shelter for large animals.

CART meets the 2nd Tuesday of every month at 6:00pm.

COWLEY COUNTY EMERGENCY RESPONSE VOLUNTEERS, INC (CCERV)

Cowley County Emergency Response Volunteer organizations came together in 2014 to form a 501(C)(3) nonprofit group. Participating emergency volunteer organizations include the Cowley County Emergency Auxiliary (CCEA), Cowley County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), Cowley County Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), and the Cowley County Animal Response Team (CART). In 2016 RACES was added to the group. CCERV is comprised of two representatives from each organization, plus an at large member to work together providing information and to jointly support the goals of each. Through the efforts of all volunteer organization, money has been raised for the purchase of communication equipment needed for training purposes and made available when these volunteers are deployed in an emergency situation. Communication is a vital part of emergency response and this equipment is crucial to our volunteers. We are grateful for the support from community organizations, businesses and individuals.

CCERV, Inc. meets the 2nd Monday in January, April, July and October at 6:00pm.

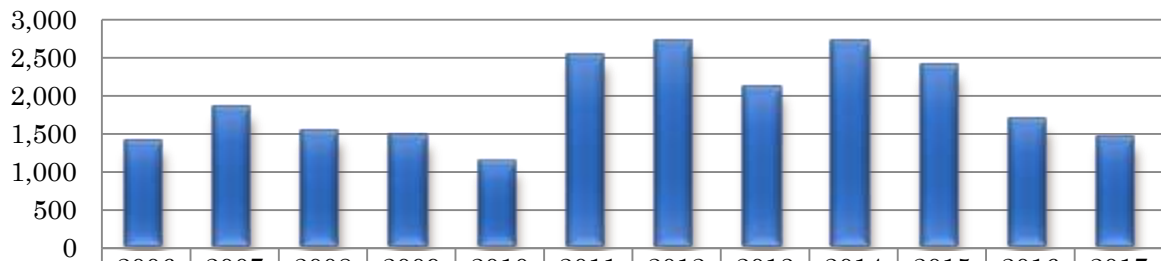
RADIO AMATEUR CIVIL EMERGENCY SERVICES (RACES) In an effort to increase the County's ability to communicate in an emergency, a Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) Group was formed in 2014. RACES members use Amateur Radio to provide communications links to critical facilities when needed in a disaster, and can also provide additional communications when existing public safety infrastructure is overwhelmed or unavailable. Amateur Radio operators are still able to communicate when other means fail, since they can create their own infrastructure, and operate without having to depend on any existing communications systems.

RACES meets the 4th Tuesday of every month at 6:30pm.

Under the continued leadership of Randy Storey, the year 2017 brought significant growth and development to the Cowley County RACES organization. A total of five new members were added, a major revision of the local RACES plan was written and approved, and Ron Upton was appointed as Deputy RACES officer to help lead the growing group. RACES members continue to work with Emergency Management to enhance their skills and to train with the County's existing communications assets, as well as to develop new tools and capabilities for the future.

Members of Cowley County RACES have been hard at work to update and improve the Amateur Radio communications capabilities within the county EOC. So far volunteers have worked to identify and iron out some bugs with an antenna on the roof of the EOC, and have helped to develop new emergency communications procedures for use both within and outside of the EOC. They are also in the process of brainstorming to develop new tools to communicate with the EOC and other locations from the field. Through their help, Cowley County is working to build a very robust backup communications network that will serve the county well in times of need.

Volunteer Hours By Year 2006-2017



■ Volunteer Hours	1,363	1,806	1,500	1,446	1,081	2,485	2,682	2,073	2,676	2,343	1,638	1,415
-------------------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

A Word from the Auxiliary - Cameron Groom, CCEA President

I can't be more proud, excited or happy to be associated with such a amazing group of volunteers than I am with the Cowley County Emergency Auxiliary. Not only being part of such a great team for nearly 20 years, I am excited to have been chosen as President to lead our organization. We participate in various activities throughout the year from the Health and Safety fair, K&O Gas and Steam Engine show to Arkansas City's annual Arkalalah celebration. We also provide parking assistance, as well as man barricades allowing Law Enforcement to be free to continue their duties. Being a not for profit organization we have also participated in fundraising opportunities that were beneficial to us to help the group purchase equipment. Our main objective of the group is storm spotting, which can be an extremely stressful and potentially dangerous. All of the trainees go through an extensive training program which allows our spotters to be knowledgeable of storms and storm formations. I believe that the citizens of Cowley County have many things to be proud of and this group is definitely at the top of that list.

What volunteers bring is the human touch, the individual, caring approach that no government program, however well-meaning and well-executed, can deliver.

~ Edward James Olmos

Christmas Gathering

Volunteers from all Emergency Management volunteer groups and their guests attended the annual Christmas gathering at the Physician's Pavilion in lieu of their regular monthly meeting on December 12th. EM staff members provided BBQ meats, soup, hot dip/chips, and drinks. Volunteers brought a sampling of their favorite finger foods and desserts to round out the menu. The groups use this time to visit with each other and share ideas for events in the year to come.

Cowley County Meet and Greet

Cowley County Emergency Management hosted the Meet and Greet for all county departments and special guests on December 12th from 9am-4pm. Staff members provided a variety of cookies and hot drinks for those visiting the office. To create a festive holiday spirit, a winter fireplace was projected on one screen and a window looking out at falling snow was projected on another while holiday songs played in the background.

Volunteer Appreciation Dinner

On April 4th, during Volunteer Appreciation Month, CCEM hosted a dinner to honor its volunteers and to recognize their 1,415 hours of volunteer service to the county during the previous year. The event was catered by Greg and Kristi Powers of Naughty Nurses BBQ. The Powers are also part of a nation-wide disaster relief organization called Operation BBQ Relief. The guest speaker for that evening was Mark Stump of the United Way 211. Mark spoke to the group about the program and how it can assist local communities during disasters.



Left Photo: Greg and Kristi Powers of Operation BBQ Relief.
Right Photo: Mark Stump of the United Way 211.

Fund Raisers

For the third year in a row, CCEA, CERT, CART and RACES volunteers spearheaded the Fun Run at Dexter's annual BBQ on July 8th. All participants who pre-registered for the event were given a t-shirt and a finisher's medal. First, second and third place medals were given to runners in the men's and women's divisions. Local law enforcement officers from the Cowley County Sheriff and Winfield Police Department (along with some other energetic citizens) provided a bicycle patrol, the City-Cowley County Health Department manned the hydration station and the Winfield Fire/EMS Reserves provided medical services to the event. The sound system and the emcee were courtesy of the Dexter Outreach Center Church. There was a drawing at the end of the race for prizes generously donated by businesses in Cowley County.

The event may not seem like something Emergency Management Volunteers would do, but there are some benefits. The groups get to be a part of a small town festival, practice their Incident Command System (ICS) skills, test out the communications plan of the newly-formed RACES team and lastly, earn some funds to support themselves.



Members of EM volunteer groups receive their assignments for the event.



RACES members make final preparations before the race begins.



The runners arrive and registration is underway.



Runners enjoy a post-race conversation.

Community Outreach and Education

CERT Lite

For the past few years, Lynne Hunter, Winfield High School teacher, has encouraged the students in her Health Class to participate in a CERT Lite (named so because its curriculum is geared toward teens) class. This fall, twelve students attended the two hour session in the Emergency Operations Center. In addition to learning about the CERT program, the students also got an introductory lesson from the Emergency Auxiliary about severe weather spotting and from the Emergency Communications Center about 911.

Health and Safety Fair

The annual Health and Safety Fair was held at the Ag Building in Arkansas City on April 1st from 9am to noon. All volunteer groups, with assistance from the Emergency Management staff, set up information tables and answered questions about the responsibilities and requirements of their respective groups.

All-Hazards Weather Radio Grant

CCEM was able to once again give away a number of NOAA Severe Weather radios to qualifying citizens in Cowley County. During the Fury on the Plains presentation in February, 11 winners were drawn. Three more radios were given out during the Health and Safety Fair in Arkansas City. The radios were made available through a FEMA grant and the sponsorship of Cowley County businesses.

National Night Out

Emergency Management staff and volunteers attended two separate NNO events this year, both on October 3rd. Winfield hosted their event at Island Park and was attended by Taylor Dory, EM Volunteer Coordinator along with CERT members Christian Snouffer and Orlan and Cheryl Underwood.

Parkerfield hosted their event at their community building and was attended by Brian Stone, EM Director along with Ron Upton, Deputy RACES Officer. In addition to meeting and greeting Parkerfield residents, Brian was able to discuss the importance of community collaboration among departments and the value of the new Cowley Alerts mass notification program. Ron was able to provide the group with an overview of the RACES program and how they can assist during disasters.



Storm Fury on the Plains

The annual storm spotter training was held at the Cowley Cinema 8 Theater near Strother Field on Tuesday, February 28th, 2017. Two separate presentations were given by Chance Hayes, Warning Coordination Meteorologist and Brad Ketcham, Lead Meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Wichita. The 2:30pm presentation had 123 attendees and the 6:30pm presentation had 113 attendees for a total of 236. NOAA All-Hazard Weather Radios were given away during that evening which and now provide early severe weather warnings to 20 new households in Cowley County.



30 Days of Preparedness

September is National Preparedness Month. While preparedness should be an activity we all practice each day, this month is dedicated to assisting citizens to be as prepared as possible. Each day, Emergency Management posted tips, links or thought-provoking ideas to help everyone be a little more prepared. After the recent events involving Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, preparedness is a hot topic. We hope that everyone gained at least one tidbit of useful information from those posts.



Severe Weather Operations

Cowley County EM, by use of the Emergency Operations Center, coordinates severe weather response activities. The EOC is the hub for all spotters, fire, and law personnel to submit reports. Outdoor Warning Sirens are sounded from the EOC and situational awareness during severe weather is a top priority for the citizens.

Severe Weather Statistics for 2017

EOC Activations



Time in the EOC



Severe Thunderstorm Watches



Severe Thunderstorm Warnings



Severe Hail Reports



Severe Wind Reports



Tornado Watches



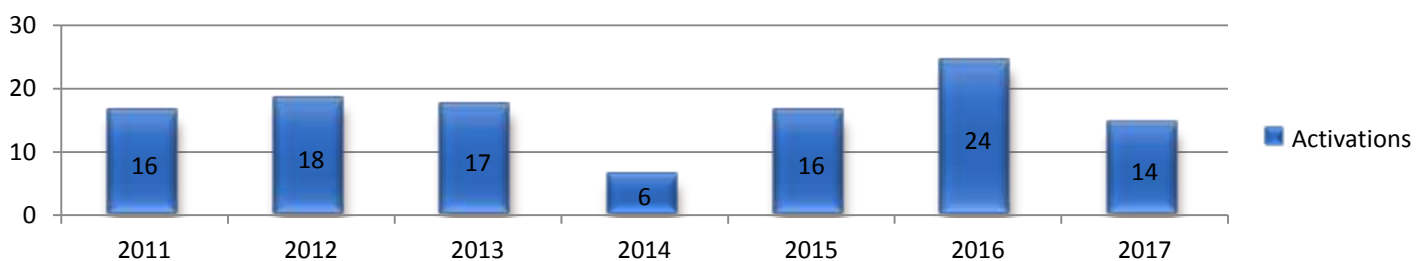
Tornado Warnings



Tornado Reports



Historical Severe Weather Activations by Year 2011-2017



Communications

Amateur Radio Class

Cowley County Emergency Management, in cooperation with the Cowley County Amateur Radio Club, once again held a Technician Level Amateur Radio class in 2017. Amateur Radio is a form of two-way radio communication where licensed operators may communicate with other Amateur Radio operators both locally and around the world. Amateur Radio operators are often able to still communicate when other means fail, and have been valuable assets during many large-scale disasters. The class sessions were held during the month of March, and resulted in 9 new operators. Through classes held since 2011, the total number of new operators in Cowley County is now 79.

Field Day

Every year around the country during the last weekend in June, Amateur Radio operators, or Hams, participate in an event known as Field Day. The purpose of this event is to test the emergency communications capability of local Hams, usually from a location without any existing equipment installed. In 2017, the Cowley County Amateur Radio Club again worked together with Cowley County Emergency Management to participate in the event. The group moved to Lion's Club Park east of Arkansas City this year, and as in years past, the Cowley County Mobile Command trailer was used for shelter and generator power. The event was considered a success, as the group was able to contact other participants nationwide, and learned a few valuable lessons along the way.



Justin Waite operates a radio station in the County's Mobile Command Trailer.



John Baker tries to pick up one or two more last contacts before the event ends as other Field Day participants look on.

Preparedness

StormReady®

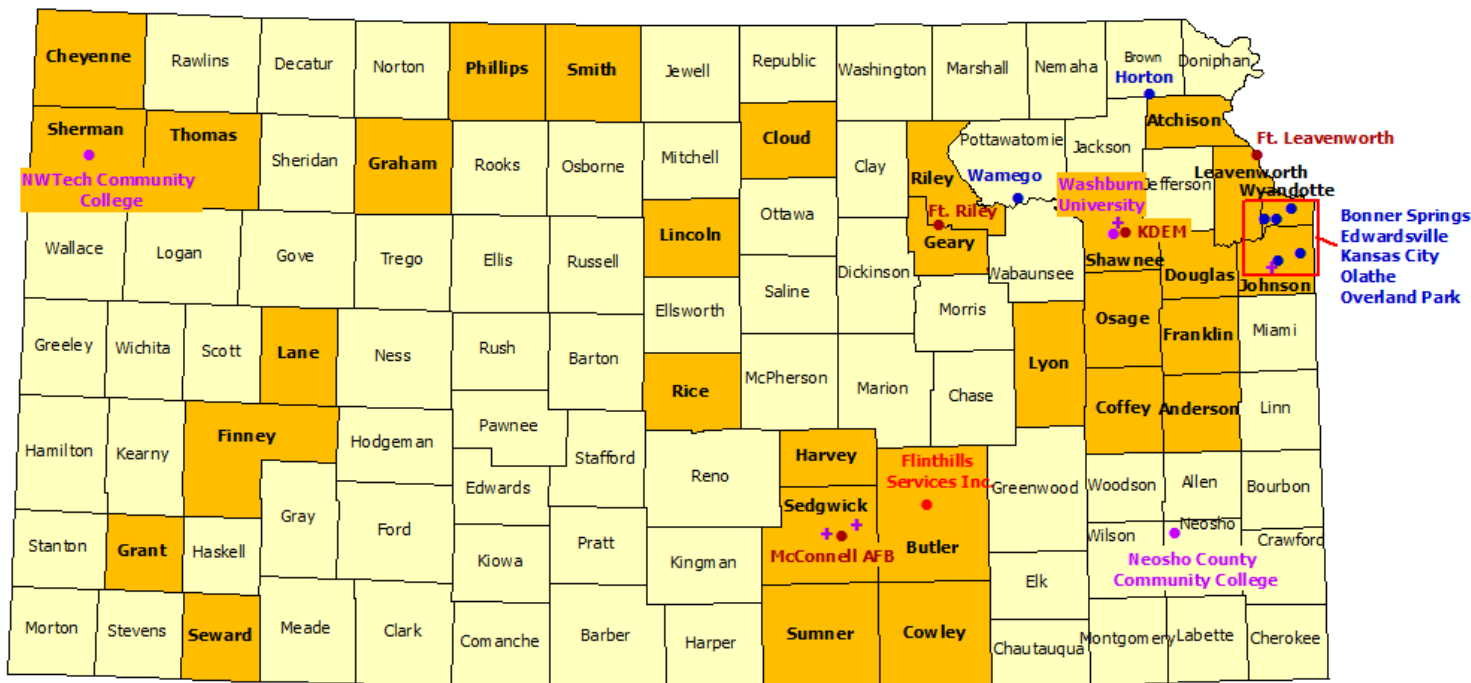
Cowley County is proud to be a StormReady® County since 1999. To remain a StormReady® community, Cowley County must adhere to the following guidelines:



- 1) Communication: establish a 24-hour warning point (CCEC) and establish an EOC;
- 2) NWS Information Reception: have 4 separate ways for the EOC/WP to receive NWS alerts;
- 3) Hydrometeorological Monitoring: have 3 separate ways to receive hydrometeorological data
- 4) Community Preparedness: have a minimum of 3 weather safety talks annually, train spotters and dispatchers biannually, and host an annual NWS spotter training; and
- 5) Administrative: have a formal hazardous weather operations plan, biennial visits by the Emergency Manager to the NWS, and an annual visit by NWS official to the community.

This year, Cowley County celebrated its sixth renewal making this eighteen years straight.

As of the end of 2017, Kansas has 50 StormReady® designations, with 31 of those being Counties.



StormReady® Communities in Kansas.
Image courtesy of
The National Weather Service

Weather-Ready Nation Ambassador

As a Weather-Ready Nation Ambassador, Cowley County serves in a role in affecting societal change by helping build a nation that is ready, responsive, and resilient to the impacts of extreme weather and water events. As an Ambassador, we are committed to the following:



- 1) Promoting Weather-Ready Nation messages;
- 2) Engaging with NOAA personnel on potential collaboration opportunities;
- 3) Sharing our success stories of preparedness; and
- 4) Serving as an example by educating employees on workplace preparedness.

Cowley County was the first County in the South Central Region (and the 26-County Wichita Forecast Area) to become a Weather-Ready Nation Ambassador. To date, there are 56 different agencies/entities in the State of Kansas that are Weather-Ready Nation Ambassadors.

In September, Cowley County was one of four agencies in the State of Kansas to be named as "Ambassador of Excellence." Nationwide, there are over 6,000 WRN Ambassadors and 99 of those were presented this honor of achievement. The NWS-Wichita Office nominated Cowley County Emergency Management based on the following content: *Cowley County KS Emergency Management goes above and beyond expectations in helping the local NWS office distribute lifesaving weather information to the citizens they serve. They have been an integral partner for several years with routinely redistributing all pertinent safety and informative information on a daily basis and during national awareness weeks via social media to ensure preparedness plans are in place for any hazard the citizen may face. During severe weather events they even dedicate a person to monitor social media accounts to quickly respond to citizen inquiries. Cowley County EM has partnered with the individual communities to distribute 400 NOAA All Hazard Weather Radios as well as providing weather and safety information with booths at different events throughout the county. Lastly Cowley County EM is part of the NWS Wichita train the trainer program meaning they regularly present weather safety information via in person training sessions to those with special needs, civic groups, DARE groups, and church organizations. The totality of increased awareness information supplied by Cowley County EM directly supports, enhances and embodies a shining star in the WRN Ambassador community."*

On November 7th, Chance Hayes and Ken Cook presented a WRN Ambassador certificate of appreciation to EM staff at the regular Cowley County Commission meeting.

November 7th, 2017



Ken Cook, NWS-Wichita Meteorologist in Charge and Chance Hayes, NWS-Wichita Warning Coordination Meteorologist along with Cowley County EM staff at the County Commission meeting.



EXERCISES

The Cowley County Emergency Management department is dedicated to the training and exercising of the local community. Two exercises were performed with numerous community agencies and also state and federal partners. These exercises test capabilities from the National Preparedness Goal and were written to Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) standards. The lessons learned from these exercises are reviewed and a specific training program is authored to address the needed area. This progressive approach enriches the community and ensures that Cowley County is ready to respond and recover from disasters.

Multi-Year Training and Exercise Plan

Cowley County, in compliance with EMPG requirements, worked to complete a multi-year training and exercise plan (during a Training and Exercise Planning Workshop) following the LEPC meeting in December. Entities and jurisdictions from all areas of Cowley County came together to develop a three year plan for training and exercising. Each entity has specific “requirements” for training and exercising. This concept pulls all entities together and works on a collective plan to suit the needs of all participants. This is the fourth year Cowley County has completed this plan, which is reviewed mid-year.

Back In Black

On May 2th, 2017, an exercise was conducted that tested the plans and policies of community partners when dealing with an electrical outage. Thirty one individuals representing 16 different agencies gathered at William Newton Hospital for the event. This discussion based exercise was extremely helpful to the assorted organizations due to the conversations that brainstormed ideas of how to deal with this simulated disaster. The scenario reinforced the fact that some agencies will not be able to assist other organizations immediately following a disaster and that the primary agency may need to look at additional options to assist them. This exercise provided valuable lessons learned and take-aways that agencies will incorporate into their plans and procedures.



Earthquake VTTX

This exercise was a very unique experience and a first for Cowley County. On June 21st, 2017, Cowley County Emergency Management sponsored the first Virtual TTX in county history. This exercise was spearheaded by staff at the Emergency Management Institute (EMI) in Maryland. The participants included agencies from eight different states. This experience allowed local disciplines to hear from other out of state agencies on lessons learned from their area. The scenario was response and recovery from an earthquake. Cowley County has gained valuable knowledge on this subject and is better prepared to deal with a possible hazard in the future.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE
NATIONAL EMERGENCY TRAINING CENTER • EMMITSBURG, MD 21727



Dust in the Wind Functional Exercise

It is said that history repeats itself. On October 6, 2016, Cowley County was subjected to a rapidly forming storm that gave the Emergency Management staff literally 11 minutes to react and provide early warning to the citizens. The first alert came in the form of a Significant Weather Advisory at 2:01pm. At 2:08pm, a Severe Thunderstorm Warning was issued and at 2:12pm, the first of several Tornado Warnings were issued.

The annual Auxiliary exercise, titled Dust in the Wind, was based off of these real world events. Cowley County's volunteers from CERT, CCEA and RACES performed extremely well while dealing with the stresses of an event such as this. Numerous community partners gathered to provide support and input to the event. It is the intention of Cowley County Emergency Management to author community based exercises so there is a sense of "whole community" response. The National Weather Service and Meade County Emergency Management also attended and participated. The Courier Traveler newspaper attended and wrote a very nice article on the event. This union of regional partners enhances the response relationship not only during an exercise but ultimately when disaster strikes.



TRAINING

Training is a large part of staff and volunteer preparedness. The volunteer groups decided that they would do joint training during 2017 on the fourth Tuesday of the month. Due to the holidays, that training was not done in November or December, but ten other sessions were held throughout the year.

Communications Room Training

This room is the hub of all severe weather activities and is used on a regular basis. There are five separate stations (plus a mapper) used during severe weather. This training provided an overview of all five stations to the attendees. The five stations are dispatching, logging, NWS chat (backup dispatching), social media/PIO and amateur radio.

Fury on the Plains

This is an excellent program provided by the NWS - Wichita office and kicks off the severe weather season for our area. More details on this training are on page 12.

Public Safety Radio Training

As part of ongoing training for all EM volunteers, Public Safety radio training sessions were held during the months of February and March. As all volunteers may have a need to use radios that operate on the County's public safety radio system, this training was designed to provide a baseline of knowledge to help ensure successful use and proficiency of the radios. The training included information on basic radio theory, as well as hands-on practical application. At the end, a test was administered, and all volunteers passed.

Mapping/Addressing

In 1999, Cowley County went to an Enhanced 911 addressing system. This training is meant to provide all volunteers with an overview of that system and give them tips and tricks to locate addresses and common known locations.

Hazardous Materials Awareness

Cowley County Emergency Management partnered with the Winfield Fire/EMS Department to present a HazMat Awareness Class for volunteers and first responders. This entry level course is intended to teach students how to identify hazardous materials, and to take basic protective measures until additional specialized help arrives. This is valuable information for all first responders and field personnel to help protect themselves and others in the event of a HazMat incident. A total of 15 volunteers and 7 first responders attended.

Cloud Formations

Chance Hayes with the NWS-Wichita Office gave a more detailed presentation of cloud formations and tell-tale signs of severe weather.

Damage Assessment

This overview provided volunteers with knowledge of damage assessment, primarily the windshield assessment, and their potential roles and responsibilities after a disaster or emergency.

Traffic Control

Basic tenets of traffic safety and control techniques were shown to the volunteers from a local trooper with the Kansas Highway Patrol.

Logging Station

A common theme among the Emergency Management realm is "documentation, documentation, documentation." This training focused on the specific station of logging during an event. It covered the importance of documentation, ways to document and what information needs to be documented.

Dispatch Station

Spotter safety during severe weather is a top priority for our agency. The dispatcher's primary role is to work with the mapper to know where every spotter is located during the entire event. The dispatcher's job is to use incoming data to safely place spotters to get real-time reports, yet maintain a safe distance. Their job is to communicate with all field spotters, relay important information over the radio and to activate the outdoor warning sirens if necessary.

EOC Functional Exercise

This exercise is an opportunity for volunteers, both seasoned and rookies, to put their yearly training in to action. For more details, check out the Dust in the Wind exercise on page 18.

Public Information Officer

In addition to the regular training provided in the County, one staff member and two volunteers attended the 2-day Public Information Officer (PIO) course in Independence, KS in December.

WORKING WITH AND IN THE COMMUNITY

Walk Kansas

Each year, the County Commission is gracious enough to offer an incentive to the employees to participate in the Walk Kansas Program offered by K-State Research and Extension. Emergency Management staff have participated for the last three years. We'd like to thank the County Commissioners for their support and willingness to help County employees become more fit by allowing us to participate in this program.

Future Finance

Future Finance is an exercise geared towards sophomores that helps youth understand some of the "realities" involved in preparing for an employable future and adulthood. This program provides students with the opportunity to learn about those choices that must be made as adults. It provides a valuable service to teens helping them learn to determine spending priorities and budget their money. The goals of Future Finance are to show teens that their performance in school today will affect their future, and give teens a chance to learn and practice personal finance skills in a fun way.

Each year, Cowley County employees volunteer their time to assist with the Future Finance in the Arkansas City and Winfield High Schools. It is rewarding not only for the students, but also for the volunteers.

From Emergency Management and volunteer groups, Brian Stone, Taylor Dory, and Cheryl Underwood assisted in Winfield. Brian Stone, Jason Kazban, Taylor Dory, and Cheryl Underwood assisted in Arkansas City.

PIO Working Group

Formed in 2016, the PIO Working Group is comprised of Public Information and Public Relations Officers from entities across Cowley County. Our mission is to provide accurate information in a timely manner to help citizens make informed decisions.

Day to day events show us the need to disseminate information in a routine manner. However, emergency events or disasters dictate an immediate response to the community. Together, this group is learning to share resources, how to disseminate accurate information quickly, yet still remain responsible for their own jurisdiction.

The group meets quarterly and has had special guests in three of the four meetings. On a local level, Marti Mutti from KSOK Radio addressed the group about the needs of the local radio station and how a local PIO can assist them. During a separate meeting, Erin McDaniel, PIO for the City of Newton, talked to the group and provided lessons learned from the Excel shooting incident that occurred in February. The last guest was Pilar Pedraza, reporter for KWCH Channel 12. She was able to address the group from her view and tell us how we can assist her. The goals of these meetings is to establish a rapport and trust with local and region media personnel.

The Cowley County PIO Working Group continues to grow and search for more ways to learn and improve their skills when dealing with the media and the general public.

DISASTERS

January 13th-15th, 2017

Everybody likes warm days, especially in January. But, we all know that those nice days are generally followed by unpleasant weather in the State of Kansas. January of 2017 proved to be no different. The majority of the State was preparing for a major ice storm expected to impact us from Jan 13-16, 2017. For Cowley County, the rain began to fall on Friday the 13th and this was the day that wreaked the most havoc on travelers. Numerous auto accidents were reported that evening as a result of the glazing of ice on the roadways. But, by Saturday the temperatures had warmed up and most of the precipitation was just rain. By Saturday evening, those temps fell and our forecast held true. Ice began to accumulate that evening, overnight and into Sunday morning. Overall, Cowley County was very fortunate with ice accumulations ranging from .25" to .40". The only issue from the ice storm was in Burden where the water pump lost power temporarily causing the system to lose pressure. A Boil Water Advisory was issued by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. The schools were closed for two days and Cowley EM assisted the local community by providing bottled water for the City to distribute to residents. Considering the much larger amounts of ice accumulations and damage in areas to our west, we consider ourselves to be fortunate.



August 5th, 2017

Several bouts of severe storms struck Cowley County throughout the year. The evening of August 5th was one of those nights. Numerous power lines and trees were destroyed as a result of high winds primarily near the Strother Field area and northwest of Arkansas City. Damage estimates were gathered and total losses were well below the County's threshold to pursue any outside aid.



Social Media in Emergency Management

Cowley County Emergency Management began using social media tools, specifically Facebook and Twitter, in February 2012. Our goal is to reach out and interact with the public before, during and after emergencies or disasters. We share photos, tips, stories, and much, much more. We encourage our citizens to interact with us and provide us with information and feedback. Please be aware that social media outlets are not intended to replace 911 and if anyone has an emergency that requires immediate assistance, please call 911 and do not use social media. We hope to stay connected with our citizens and provide accurate information in a timely, reliable manner.

The Cowley County website is a valuable place to see updated information such as weather situation reports, bridge work, road closings, preparedness tips, departmental plans and volunteer group information. Go to <http://www.cowleycounty.org/em> to check out our latest information.



Cowley County EM has 780 Twitter followers and has sent a total of 5,521 tweets to our followers.



Cowley County EM has 3,697 Facebook page likes. The two cities with the most followers are Arkansas City (1,110) and Winfield (1,103). The most popular time our followers view our page is 8:00pm. Posts on two dates generated the most reaches: April 4th (Photo of hail on US 160 east of Winfield) reached 13,791 viewers and May 18th (Severe Weather Forecast) reached 10,975 viewers.

Cowley County Emergency Management

321 E. 10th Ave.

Winfield, KS 67156

(620) 221-0470 or (620) 441-4569

E-mail: emergencymanagement@cowleycounty.org

Web: <http://www.cowleycounty.org/em>



Follow us on:

Twitter: @CowleyCountyEM



Facebook: www.facebook.com/CowleyCountyEM

